THE NAP SACK PROJECT: A CRITICAL ARTS-BASED INQUIRY INTO THE PRECARIOUS BODIES OF WAR

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With all my heart,

Kandice Harris

Abstract

The Nap Sack Project is a critical arts-based inquiry into the social construction of war veteran/civilian in American culture. Using art-making as a critical collaborative act, this research searches to define and intervene into the war veteran/civilian binary. This thesis will explore how this binary is structured through forms of recognition in our culture. These forms of recognition have become normative acts or annual celebrations like Veterans Day and Memorial Day but, as I present here, do not lend themselves to recognizing the bodies of war as precarious. The art produced as well as the art-making events challenge these forms of recognition. By challenging how we as a community function within the war veteran/civilian binary, I, through the use of the Nap Sack Project, try to answer the call for interdependence in American culture and define the bodies of war as precarious.

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INTRODUCTION

The Nap Sack Project is a critical arts-based inquiry into the social construction of war veteran/civilian in American culture. Using art-making as a critical collaborative act, this research searches how to define and intervene into the war veteran/civilian binary. In this thesis I will explore how this binary is structured through forms of recognition in our culture. These forms of recognition have become normative acts or annual celebrations like Veterans Day and Memorial Day but, as I present here, do not lend themselves to recognizing the bodies of war as precarious. The art produced as well as the art-making events challenge these forms of recognition. By challenging how we as a community function within the war veteran/civilian binary, I, through the use of the Nap Sack Project, hope to reestablish the need for interdependence in American culture and represent the bodies of war as precarious. The following introduction is broken down into three sections. The first section of this introduction will speak about the binary and the second about the Nap Sack Project. The third section will explain how this thesis is organized in terms of chapter breakdown and academic influence behind each chapter.

The Binary

In regard to the war veteran/civilian binary I would like to first note that it is a cultural binary structured specifically by America war culture. Basically, binary terms are terms that are viewed as polar opposites such as man/women, Black/White, rich/poor or gay/straight. A binary are critical terms that are position within a culture because they "socially and historically constructed" (Anderson & Collins, 2013). In regard to the war

veteran/civilian binary, it has evolved over the years and has become more obvious is the modern perpetual-war era in America. According to race, class and gender scholars Anderson and Collins, “binary constructions created an “otherness”(2013). The implications of “otherness” that operate within the war veteran/civilian binary are examined in this thesis.

In searching to define war veteran/civilian, the Nap Sack Project allowed me opportunity to explore this binary, how it functions and how it is structured. I link the cultural construction of this binary to forms of recognition between civilian and war veteran. I note how Veterans Day and Memorial Day celebrations are a cultural construction that reinforces this binary rather than creating an opportunity for a community to highlight vulnerabilities and interdependency.

Although this binary is one of social construction, in order to address our interdependency as a community this thesis takes the position that we are all precarious bodies; who need each other in a community. Our precarious bodies are link by responsibilities, obligations and rituals. By isolating the cultural construction of war veteran/civilian I am interested in understanding how these precarious bodies actively break away from the binary frames through a new form of recognition, the Nap Sack Project. By including my own ignorance in relationship to this binary I seek to show myself as vulnerable and precarious as well. With the inclusion of a civilian voice, there is a struggle to understand identity and how to perform social roles without reinforcing the frames of war.

The Project

This project began as a class assignment and grew into a research project as well as a new way to recognize and show support for war veterans. The project consisted of seven art-making events which were hosted in locations throughout the San Angelo, TX community: Angelo State University, San Angelo Fine Arts Museum, Glenmore Elementary and Stagecoach Saloon. The art created from these events were disseminated across Texas, from San Angelo to Houston.

The Nap Sack is a personal token of recognition and respect for the American war veteran experience. The sack is a 3X4 inch muslin bag that includes small, fragile clay stars and a poem which reads,

"On your sleepless nights count the stars
My eyes have not seen
my ears lean into listen
my soul bares witness to the peace you keep."

What makes the sack personal is the art-making process where participants kneaded clay, cut stars and baked them during the events. While the stars baked in clay ovens, the participants wrote the poem over a blank face of a soldier. During the various events each participant took creative freedoms with how the poem was written and designed. In some instances, other drawings were included as symbols of further recognition. On the outside of the nap sack is a label that reads; "Please accept this as a token of recognition from one person made of clay to another."

Each art-maker had a chance to communicate directly with a war veteran with the creation of a small piece of art. Some of the art-makers were war veterans others civilians. No matter the military affiliation, each took about thirty minutes to an hour out of their day to say thank you, job well done, we support you, we love you and we understand the experience changed you in some way.

The Research

Utilizing a postmodern qualitative approach, the project and the research recorded are autoethnographic accounts of the art-makers/participants in the art-making process and recipients of the Nap Sacks. According to Tierney (1998) "autoethnography confronts dominant forms of representation and power in an attempt to reclaim, through self-reflective response, representational spaces that have marginalized those of us at the borders" (1998). This is beneficial to the academic community because it brings in other voices of recognition. Because this was a mobile art project the voices recorded in this project are diverse and break away from traditional forms of positivist research.

Another element of diversity in this project is the voice of the researcher. Critical art-based inquiry challenges both the artist and the researcher (Finely, 2011). The challenge is to implement social change that is critical to modern normative practices, in this case modern normative celebrations, ceremonies and frames associated with war veterans as a result of the American military culture. The artist in some way motivates others to change through a different form of expression, and the researcher keeps data files of encounters and connects the intellectual dots. The two live in one body, this body. This body included hands to

create, a heart to interpret feelings, and eyes that search for knowledge. Through these eyes we will look at the art making process, the avenues of art dissemination, and aesthetic properties of this project. With the formulation of interpreted data, this research, public action, and social redress will be discussed. The goal is to include my own voice to give context with understanding of space and time (Pelias, 2004; Marker, 2010; Lather, 2010; Alcoff, 2010; Jackson &Mazzei, 2010; Pelias, 2011; Spry, 2011; Giardina & Newman, 2011; Goltz, 2011; Gingrich-Philbrook, 2005).

Judith Butler, bell hooks and Ron Pelias add focus to this projects' perspective. Butler explores the meaning of grievalbe bodies in relationship to war veterans and explains the socially constructed frames of war we operate within in America (Butler, 2009). hooks speaks about community and how to teach hope as well as apply social change through teaching practices (hooks, 2009). Ron Pelias awakened the academic within me by reminding academia that the heart of the researcher is imperative to break away from positivist concepts in research (2004). Each scholar influenced the initial creation of the nap sack and has resonated in the heart of this researcher.

Chapter one will discuss this project in relationship with qualitative research practices and will overview the methodological approach, the epistemological issues and will begin documenting personal accounts in the research process. I will help explore the question of "recognition" in relationship to war veterans in the American community. Butler makes the point in asking "how such norms operate to produce certain subjects as 'recognizable persons' and to make other decidedly more difficult to recognize" (2009). The question is formed, how do we recognize the war veteran experience? One of her compelling arguments

for change states: “The problem is not merely how to include more people within existing norms, but to consider how existing norms allocate recognition differently” (Butler, 2009). Breaking away from the norms mean to in essence break free from the socially constructed frames. These frames keep those in power that “manipulate the terms of appearance” so that we continue to reproduce the public reconstruction of frames (Butler, 2009). The main purpose of the project is to recognize American War Veterans as precarious bodies by breaking away from traditional celebratory frames and providing a dialogic space catered toward change.

Judith Butler highlights that the current frames do not bring to light the precariousness of the war veteran’s body:

> Lives are by definition precarious: they can be expunged at will or by accident; their persistence is in no sense guaranteed. In some sense, this is a feature of all life, and there is no thinking of life that is not precarious -- except, of course in fantasy and in military fantasies in particular. (Butler, 2009)

She discusses how to apprehend a life as “precarious” and which bodies are grievable in accordance to the social frames historically constructed about war:

> Although precarious life is a generalized condition, it is paradoxically, the condition of being conditioned. In other words we can say of all life that it is precarious, which is to say that life always emerges and is sustained within conditions of life…We cannot easily recognize life outside the frames in which it is given, and those frames not only structure how we come to know and identify life but constitute sustaining conditions from those very lives. Conditions have to be sustained, which means that

> they exist not as static entities, be as reproducible social institutions and relations. We would not have a responsibility to maintain conditions of life if those conditions did not require renewal…The frame functions normatively, but it can, depending on the specific mode of circulation, call certain fields of normativity into question. Such frames structure modes of recognition, especially during time of war, but their limits and their contingency become subject to exposure and critical intervention as well. (Butler, 2009)

Butler brings to light the responsibility of recognition and the need for exposure as well as critical intervention into the subject of war and how we understand the bodies involved with war. To answer Butlers' call to action, this project serves as a critical intervention into the socially constructed frames and moves to add a new form of recognition and social responsibility.

Discussing the intersectionality in research and reflexivity associated with aesthetics, chapter two will also examine the educational element of this project. The art making events became a small community of free to express civilians and veterans sharing personal accounts about war. The discussions about family and friends stories shared by participants resonated differently in each space. The stories which become narratives provide a new form of research that allows this research to critically intervene into frames Butler highlights as well as provides hope.

In *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* bell hooks highlights the social construction of our society around the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent years.

> When the tragic events of 9/11 occurred it was as though, in just a few moments in time all our work to end domination in all form, all our pedagogies of hope, were rendered meaningless as much of the American public, reacting to the news coverage of the tragedy, responded with an outpouring of imperialist white-supremacist nationalist capitalist patriarchal rage against terrorists defined as dark-skinned others even when there were no images, no concrete proof. (hooks, 2003)

The frames that Butler speaks of have been infused historically by an "imperialist white-supremacist nationalist capitalist patriarchal" society (hooks, 2003). I take the position that it is time to change our approach to rebuild American community. As a community we need to be a more active in our approach to recognizing and changing socially constructed responses to the other and move toward a more inclusive dialogue. The dominant "imperialist, white-supremacist nationalist capitalist patriarchal" political influence has shaped how we view and value the bodies that participate in war. With hope for change through art-making, by functioning as teacher/collaborator/researcher/artist, the voice behind the research hopes to be the catalyst toward critical thinking as well as creative problem-solving to this social problem.

Hope is found in the heart and the embodied "I". One goal of the third chapter is to document how the artist/researcher walked through the art-dissemination process. Highlighting the politically and culturally situated body of the artist/researcher, this chapter explores the embodiment of the critical "I" in research and the interpretive "I" in art-making. Seeing the biographical footprint of the researcher and artist in regards to social change, hope and the deconstruction of binaries is the motivation of this evaluation. Embodying heart in

research strives to break away from positivist thinking and become more active in critical reflection. According to Pelias: “The heart learns that stories are the truths that won’t keep still” (2004). The heart plays a large role and has an irreplaceable function in the research process as well as my academic journey. In *Methodology of the Heart* Ron Pelias insists that the heart is essential in academic writing:

> To represent the human anatomy without including the heart is the equivalent of describing a car without mentioning its motor. The crisis of representation stems from forgetting where the power is. Pinning a butterfly to a mat, classifying it, and presenting it to other collectors say nothing of its beauty. It’s always a question of what story you want to tell. Knowing what is true, what is valid and reliable, and to predict should come from listening to as many stories as you can and decide how to act responsibly. (Pelias, 2004)

To incorporate heart is one of the goals of this research project.

Working past the historical frames and by infusing hope into a community that has become marginalized by socially constructed traditions The Nap Sack project embodies heart and provides opportunity for critical intervention with art. The events consist of art making sessions that function as a space for critical reflexivity. The reflexivity involved in critical arts-based inquiry provides a space for dialogue concerning social issues and it is within this dialogic space that the reflexivity happens. “It is a form of cultural resistance and a way to create a critical and dialogic space in which to engage in a struggle over the control of knowledge and the domination of discourse” (Finely, 2011). A dialogic space is a space in which to reflect on ideas and see them from multiple points of view at once (Wegerif, 2010).

This sort of space provides a platform for change in thought and action and reevaluates how a culture operates and according the Butler reproduce it's own frames. (2009).

For example, one project that uses critical reflexivity for social change is the AIDS Memorial Quilt. The quilt has over 48,000 names on 3" by 6" panels. This massive symbol was created to remember the names of those who have lost their lives to AIDS. In 1987 the original group of quilters came up with this project so that the names of their family members, friends, neighbors and partners would not be forgotten. Throughout its 25-year history, this masterpiece created by the people, for the people has been used to:

> fight prejudice, and to raise awareness and funding for direct service and advocacy groups. The Quilt is a catalyst and conduit, a tool for healing and grief therapy, a springboard for frank dialogue, both civic and private. It gives voice to far too many lives lost, telling us that never again should we ever leave a community in need and dying, ignored and uncared for. It is a stark reminder that we can never forget that we are all inextricable linked in life. (Rhoad, 2012)

An impressive feature of this project is the 20 million viewers worldwide. Each viewer walks the length and reads the names displayed on this community art project. Not only is the project successful in terms of recognizing a social problem; it provides critical reflexivity with both the making of the quilt and the audience that views it. It provides a platform for social change with and through art.

The Nap Sack project has provided, on a smaller scale, a similar sort of dialogic space and critical reflexivity with art-making sessions and ultimately the dissemination process. One of the challenges addressed by this project is how one effectively disseminates messages

of hope and incites change without becoming patronizing. How, as a researcher, do I disseminate the heart of a community and who is worthy of such heartfelt messages? How do I break away from traditional frames of dissemination and recognition to communicate with those who have been marginalized by the American war veteran experience? The how becomes the when and where within moments of sporadic opportunities. The goal of this thesis is to answer these questions through qualitative practices of interpretation.

To review, this thesis will be broken down into four chapters. Chapter one will discuss the methodological grounding of the project and discuss cultural norms of recognition. Chapter two will discuss the hope of teaching a community about the frames and helping deconstruct them with art making. The third chapter will discuss the dissemination of the heart through an activist approach in research execution and the embodied "I" in the data finds. Following chapter three will be the final chapter. In this chapter, I will discuss how this research project functions in relationship to poplar war discourse and explore the research implication. In the final chapter, I endorse the continued use of action and community-based research to critically intervening into military culture in America.

CHAPTER I: THE NAP SACK PROJECT IN THEORY

This postmodern qualitative inquiry into the socially constructed binaries of the American war veteran and the American civilian will begin with an overview of the research method, practices and approaches. After laying the foundation of the research, the conversation will proceed to the topic of war veteran and civilian. Consulting the epistemological implications of this relationship will guide the conclusion of this chapter. Throughout this first chapter there will be an inherent drive to define self and other.

This conception of self and other plays a major role in how this research practice was performed and how the research will be discussed in this thesis. Because it is grounded in a feminist approach to research, it is important to note that data will be reported in narrative form. Some passages parade poetry as a form of interpreted knowledge. These narratives and poetic interpretations are writings associated with The Nap Sack Project.

These will serve ambidextrously as inquiry and data collection: "Writing is inquiry. Writing is a kind of data collection" (Finley, 2010). Exploring the war veteran experience through dialogue with civilians, veterans, and others throughout The Nap Sack Project was in hopes that we could break normative thoughts about war veterans and how we all function as a community.

Evidence of Experience

Critical qualitative research is one mode of inquiry into social limitations or problems produced by normative power structures. The motivation to address these social concerns lies

in the drive to bring awareness to the manipulation behind power. The manipulation of power produces frames. “Power manipulates the terms of appearance and one cannot break out of the frame, one is framed, which means one is accused, but also judged in advance, without valid evidence and without any obvious form of redress” (hooks, 2010). In addressing forms of oppression, this approach records moments in people’s lives and interprets the relationship between these moments and dominating power structures.

Researchers in this field employ critical thought and action toward social problems. The definition of *critical* within this research model attacks positivist naivety and specifically “refers to transcendental realism that rejects methodological individualism and universal claims of truth” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). With this unique perspective, researchers then develop research that is “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). There are four ethics associated with critical research:

- Expose the diversity of realities
- Engage with the webs of interaction that construct problems in ways that lead to power/privilege of a particular group
- Reposition problems and decisions toward social justice
- Join in solidarity with the traditionally oppressed to create new ways of functioning. (Ritchie & Ran, 2010)

Deriving from a critical perspective, researchers then use a set of interpretive, material practices that help define the world as it is within currently dominate power structures. They position the material into context by referencing social construction, culture and standpoint.

Qualitative researchers study things in their natural environment with an interpretive or naturalistic approach. Empirical data can be collected and produced in many different ways within this research field. Some research strategies include, but are not limited to, interviews, case studies, performance, and direct observations. “We interpret, we perform, we interpret, we challenge and we believe nothing is ever certain” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The data, especially in arts-based inquiry, can also be presented in a plethora of forms such as poetry, drama, and mural paintings.

Within the reporting of data is the voice of the researcher. The presence of the researcher is a key element to postmodern critical qualitative research. To help define their own personal biography in relationship to the “other” they are studying, researchers “blend their own observations with the self-report provided by subjects through interviews, life story, personal experience, and case study documents” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The inclusion of the researcher’s voice helps promote critical thinking and reflexivity within the research.

Knowledge from interpretive modes of qualitative research is produced when the researcher interprets experience: “Lived experience cannot be studied directly because language, speech, and systems of discourse mediate and define the very experience one attempts to describe. We study the representations of experience, not experience itself” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The foundation of inquiry explores experience: “[K]nowledge rooted in experience shapes what we value and as a consequence how we know what we know as well as how we use what we know” (hooks, 2010). The knowledge produced

reaches back to the epistemological issue that produced the inquiry and challenges change to occur.

Methods of Collecting and Interpreting Data

The Nap Sack Project is a critical arts-based inquiry. Finley argues, "Critical arts-based inquiry situates the artist-as-researcher or researcher-as-artist…It demonstrates an activist approach to research in which the ultimate value of research derives from its usefulness to the community in which the research occurs" (2011). This research etches out representation through "the performance of community based activism" (Finley, 2011). This representation promotes "positive social change through inclusion and emotional understandings created among communities of learners/participant/researcher" (Finely, 2011). This sort of inquiry requires a methodical approach to art and what it can do for a community. It uses art as a catalyst for change. The art produced by this type of inquiry is both "a mode of inquiry and a methodology of performing social activism" (Finely, 2011). Arts-based research can be recorded in many ways, be it literary, visual, performative or interdisciplinary.

Inquiry

To fulfill this project's goal to provide a non-traditional recognition to the war veteran experience, art-making events were facilitated in order to investigate community binaries. Each event contained a critical component that sought to incite activism and promote critical thinking about the socially constructed binaries of war veteran/civilian.

"Knowledge about the world is socially constructed" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), and with that I discuss these frames created by our own hands, thoughts, and emotions either unknowingly and perhaps under the puppet strings of a larger more oppressive power.

The Nap Sack Project: Practicing Inquiry and Intervention

As an American, I rarely discussed the war veteran experience before this project. I would think intensely of the meaning of war from time to time and note to myself that I hated violence. I had always known war veterans as my dad's tall best friend, my grandfather and co-director/co-worker from Sam Houston State University. I had never really gone into detail about the experience until I interviewed a classmate at Angelo State University. One of the major ideas we agreed upon in my interviews was the celebratory aspect of military culture in America. My classmate specifically had opposition to the idea of standing for the national anthem at sporting events when the speakers would announce for all veterans to stand.

During interviews, he discussed an experience that happened during class time. The discussion in class surrounded controversy over mediated images of dead soldiers with flags draped over their coffins during the Vietnam War. When his veteran status was revealed, he was surprised and confused by the response. After introducing himself as an infantryman with precise diction, like a good soldier, the room broke out into clapping and cheering. He received a standing ovation in the classroom when fellow classmates found out he had served in the Iraq/Afghanistan war. He said it reminded him of a movie.

On the other side of the coin, as a civilian, I have always questioned what the appropriate response would be. Once, I picked up the bill at Pizza Hut for a woman in

uniform. She may have enjoyed the solitude, but it seemed like she needed a little recognition. She thanked me with confusion in her eyes and to this day I feel like it was one of the most awkward moments. What is the correct form of recognition?

Why do American civilians glorify war? We glorify the idea of war when we use parades and celebrations as our only vehicle of recognition. By definition war is a period of hostile relations between countries, states, or factions that leads to fighting between armed forces, especially in land, air, or sea battles. *Webster* missed a key element to war, however: the human body. War veterans are the definition of war, not what is written in the books. This definition is derived from experience. American civilians celebrate Veteran's Day and Memorial Day each year by the swimming pool with a beer, in the backyard barbequing or at the local civic center eating cake and drinking punch. Jet fighters fly over the White House. We enjoy our days off of work and school. We dress up in red, white, and blue to attend ribbon-cutting ceremonies in million dollar neighborhoods for the "memorial" park erected in remembrance, which is laced with expensive plants, plaques and marble benches. Very rarely do we discuss how we use war in our capitalist society or how we value/devalue the bodies that participate in war. Rarely will we, as a community, take the time to recognize the war-veteran experience in the eyes of a homeless person: "American civilians continue to love what veterans represent – duty, sacrifice, strength, leadership – but we have less and less true understanding of the veteran experience" (Smith, 2010). To understand the American War veteran experience, one could try to narrow down a person's identity by his or her war affiliations, such as Vietnam War Veteran, Korean War Veteran, Iraq War Veteran, Afghanistan War Veteran or even the Civil War Veteran. Those who have participated in war

have a lateral understanding, but as civilians we never really understand that experience because it is not an experience lived by our bodies.

Without understanding, how can one truly recognize? Why is it important to recognize? Whether a veteran or civilian, “due recognition is not just a courtesy owed people. It is a vital human need” (Taylor, 1994). Proper recognition works its way through a new “bodily ontology, one that implies the rethinking of precariousness, vulnerability, injurability, interdependence, exposure, bodily persistence, desire, work and the claims of language and social belonging” (Butler, 2009). Butler speaks about the problem being twofold: ontological and epistemological. More specifically, there is a cause and effect relationship: “normative production of ontology thus produces epistemological problem(s)” (Butler, 2010). In order to cater to the vital human need of recognition researchers, community members and institutions need to provide environments that are conducive to changing the understanding of bodily ontology. This understanding can then break the epistemological chains associated with the veteran experience.

As an artist-researcher, it was my responsibility to produce this sort of environment during the art-making sessions. During one session, I asked a group of graduate students for a one-word response to the word “veteran”. They answered with: fighter, Vietnam, isolated, PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), benefits, homeless, strong, soldier, medal, drugs, disabled, flag, funeral. We moved on to discuss why Vietnam was the only war mentioned in the responses, and no one could pin-point the reasoning. I believe it was because this war brought to light the veteran experience and gave a clear picture of war veterans trying to re-assimilate back into society while finding resistance. This picture became clearer when the

media began showing images of coffins draped with flags and dead bodies on the nightly news. For some Vietnam War Veterans, drug abuse followed them back home and made it difficult for American civilians to see the integrity attached to the junkie deep down inside the veteran. The following narratives will discuss how the Nap Sack Project functioned as a critical space in which participants could redefine the bodily ontology of war veterans.

Veterans Day Celebration

During a Veterans Day Celebration, the Nap Sack Project set up an art-making session. Large plastic tables and one clay-baking machine funneled students, faculty and staff through the process of making a nap sack. Everyone stood as Taps played over the loud speaker. I paused in Nap Sack instructions to show respect. On this day, the setup served as an original thought toward what it meant to recognize versus celebrate the veteran experience. The tables contained clay, wax paper, string, paper, pencils as well as "Interesting Fact" sheets provided by the Multicultural Center. The Census Bureau sourced the information on the small rectangular fact sheets that contained statements such as, "Thirty-five percent of all living veterans served during the Vietnam War." Bulleted down the page were:

- "7.6 million Vietnam-era veterans (1964-1975)
- 4.5 million Gulf War veterans (August 1990 to present)
- 2.3 million World War II veterans (1941-194)
- 2.7 Veterans of the Korean War (1950-1953)
- 47,000 veterans of both the Vietnam and Gulf War eras."

I attempted to use these fact sheets as conversation starters. I quickly moved to open ended questions. I needed to find a new avenue to explore experience.

The talk around the table included whispered stories about boyfriends, fathers, mothers as well as personal accounts. One student who came for extra credit discussed how Congress had messed with funds and National Reserve students weren't receiving money for school at that moment. Another person discussed frustration with the disability rate of the current war. More than just stories about how one interacted with war veterans in their lives, this became a moment for participants to vent. This may have been a rebuttal to the informative flyers. The voices of the participants used the time, without knowledge of doing so, to discuss a new "bodily ontology." It was important for most participants to describe the veterans in their lives as more colorful than the statistics could paint.

Most participants broke from production to have a chunk of a huge, table-long sandwich, red punch, and a slice of marble cake. Many students walked hurriedly past the table, but there were a few curious students that asked about the project. During the height of chaos at the table, one gentleman approached with a Purple Heart on his shoulder. The rehearsed line of "This is a token of recognition and respect" rolled off my tongue. He asked if he should take one. We both stared at each other for a moment. He was the first person to ever ask for one. This gentleman had several injuries to his face, but he was articulate enough for me to understand the conversation. He walked with a limp and possessed great charm. Although I never caught his name, my hopes are that his experience with the nap sack will be a positive one.

To reiterate, Butler states a need for a new "bodily ontology, one that implies the rethinking of precariousness, vulnerability, injurability, interdependence, exposure, bodily persistence, desire, work and the claims of language and social belonging" (2009). During this Veterans Day celebration, the Nap Sack Project was a living vehicle driving the theme that "existing norms allocate recognition differently" (Butler, 2009). Although participants engaged in the celebration, the venting session was therapeutic, not only for the participants, but those who passed by. It exposed disgruntled stories concerning war veterans, not as a storm of sound, but as a quiet whisper in the halls of the Angelo State University University Center.

At this event I shared a story about my father's best friend. He was a 6'11" Vietnam Veteran that always had to duck his head low to come into our home. He had a charming and relaxed demeanor. He spent his final hours in the VA hospital. My parents both went to spend time with him. After driving three hours, my parents entered the closest building to inquire about directions. They entered a floor that looked hollowed. Nobody was moving, the lights were on, but bodies were absent from the hall. Out of the blue, a nurse rushes up to them and informs them there was a rogue shooter on this floor, "Get Down!" My parents scaled the wall to the elevator, hurried into the elevator and found refuge on the floor above, which bounced with energy. During the visit they found out that a veteran with PTSD had erupted in violence, shooting one person. They searched the news that evening for coverage of the story, and there was none. Why was a shooting at a VA hospital absent from news headlines? More importantly, why was the next floor up still operating at normal capacity? This led me to believe this wasn't the first time, nor had it been the last. Discussing this story

with the participants opened up a new direction in the conversation where we discussed recognition in relationship to the media. Disability was a common thread to the stories shared, be it mental or physical. The participants continued looking to the right and left, discussing, all while their hands molded, crafted, wrote poetry and created a new way to communicate recognition.

In this moment of the research, the Nap Sack Project addressed a rethinking in exposure, social belonging and interdependence. Exposure to actual real-life experiences and true heartfelt stories helped construct a path to knowledge. The stories were about war veterans' social belonging to the participants. The stories were the ones without the filter of microphones, cameras, or tape recorders. Each participant took a piece and left a piece of the conversation with the art they made that day. The presence of the Purple Heart war veteran who asked for a nap sack highlighted the interdependence between the war veteran and American civilian. This aspect of the project addressed the idea the "something isn't recognized by recognition" (Butler, 2009). The war veteran experience is not recognized by modern day Veterans Day and Memorial Day celebrations.

A Talk in the Park

One can clearly document the line of experience when an adult and a child have a conversation. Sitting in Hermann Park in Houston, TX on a bright day, I sparked up a conversation with an Iraq War Veteran. Our words became quicksand, leading us to the moral compass of killing. She said, "My son asked me one day after my deployment, 'Isn't killing a sin?'" She was shocked by this question. She never considered herself a killer, but

watching her six-year-old look for meaning, she realized she had been “brainwashed.” For her, the experience of boot camp had factored out all previous moral concerns with killing because she wanted to be all she could be, pass the test, stand tall and be one of the few, the proud, the marines. She saw it as a patriotic duty and a form of self-preservation. Experiencing the question from her son removed the boot camp blinders. Dropping those blinders are necessary for reentering a community as a war veteran, and in this case, it was important for a single mother to look her son in his face and say that killing is not an accepted action in a community. I gave her a nap sack, but she gave me a wealth of insight into the ever-changing moral compass of war veterans.

San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts

I arrive in a rush to set-up the event. After waiting months, the time had arrived to execute the first event, and I was late with my son and friend helping me push back time by running up the hill to the San Angelo Fine Arts Museum. This particular Thursday, we added the Nap Sack Project into their weekly family art day. Setting up the machines that I had purchased with my own funds made me proud.

Community members, graduate students, and undergraduate students receiving extra credit arrived into a space not connected to a university. Pizza was donated, helpers were ready, and I tried not to panic. We all crowded around a long, rather large table covered in butcher paper and proceeded with the steps. Step one: make the stars and have a runner run across the room to bake them. Step two: try to find space to write the poem and read it off of only one copy, meaning you had to actually talk to the person next to you for details. Step

three: combine the stars and the poem in the sacks donated by the Angelo State University Multicultural Center. I observed each person move or try to move around this table to complete the process.

There was an issue with getting a wheelchair back into the corner. The initial red flag went off in my head, questioning how I could have overlooked being handicap accessible. I had managed a theatre for five years prior to my graduate work. Did all that training go out the window? After I moved the chair from her way, I said, “I’m sorry about that.” She said, “Thank you. Now, how do we make these?” I explained the process. She began. She placed her elbow on the table with her opposite hand. This was used to hold the wax paper down. She began to use the clay cutter to cut out stars. I could see from the corner of my eye that she was having difficulty, and I encouraged her by saying, “You can really start on step two or three. It doesn’t matter. We are all working together.” “No, I want to complete the whole thing. I read about this in the newspaper and I came from thirty minutes away today to make one of these. I’m a veteran too, and they need someone to send them love.” She told me a little about her experience and I listened and then moved quickly to help someone else. I kept her in the corner of my eye through the whole event. As I left, with materials boxed up on a dolly, I watched her board the rural rides bus. It was handicapped accessible. As her wheelchair lifted into the vehicle, there was no cheesy wave goodbye, although I longed for one. This woman had shown me true perseverance and dedication to this project. I was humbled and inspired in the same moment. I never got her name, but her face and wheelchair have made an impression in my heart.

CHAPTER II: INTERSECTIONALITY, AESTHETIC NEED, AND CRITICAL THINKING

As discussed in chapter one, qualitative practices encourage the use of collaborative research practices that intersect with other research methodological approaches. This research project is an embodiment of different research practices that help produce a dialogic space. A dialogic space is a liminal space of critical thought and reflexivity. This project facilitated critical thought during the art-making sessions by presenting a new form of recognition and respect. By addressing that this was a new form of honor, participants began to reflect critically on the ways in which we have celebrated the war-veteran experience. Keeping this dialogic space became a practice of academic flexibility and ingenuity. This is known as openness in research, and "openness is the cornerstone of strong arts-based inquiry" (Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouais, Grauer, 2006). The methods and practices used in this project have roots that all trace back to qualitative research methods in which questions are explored and discussed, as noted in chapter one. Embracing the concept of a collaborative research approach, I will pin-point in this chapter how multiple methods influenced the cultivation of knowledge in this thesis. Along with critical arts-based inquiry, the methods discussed in this chapter are action research, community based research and a/r/tography.

The project began as an exploration of the relationship between war veteran and civilian. Through art, this research project positioned itself to promote social activism on the injustices I, as researcher and artist, felt were connected to the war-veteran experience in America. These injustices include, but are not limited to, rape victims, the frequency of

PTSD in war veterans, and homelessness as a result of low socio economic conditions or drug addiction. What transpired through the research process indicated this project was just as important for the participants as it is for war veterans. Civilians are rarely afforded an opportunity to explore their own identities as civilians or given a critical magnifying glass to see themselves with.

One way to describe this research is to call it a critical arts-based inquiry. As noted before, this inquiry uses the artist as researcher and the researcher as artist. There is an activist approach to the art produced, and it serves as a form of protest to a political power structure. Highlighting the words *critical* and *inquiry* help delineate the difference between critical arts-based inquiry and the methodologies discussed in this chapter. *Critical* deals with the epistemological approach of deconstructing and exposing oppressive power structures. *Inquiry* is an ongoing function of the research that searches to "find the social power structure in an attempt to discover the taught as it relates to social power struggles" (Giroux, 1982). Through the narrative and poetic inquires laced throughout this thesis, data regarding this inquiry is presented.

To overview the history: Arts-based inquiry emerged from three different areas of art. Visual arts, drama, and literary art are the three pillars in this research field. Arts-based research now shares its borders with education, communication, social sciences and many others, all in the hopes of providing social justice. The practices of art-based inquiry have a commitment to aesthetic and education practices, inquiry-laden processes, searching for meaning, and interpreting understanding: "Emerging in arts-based educational research often means that researchers are immersed in a journey of discovery, of learning about themselves

as well as themselves in relationship with others" (Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouais, Grauer, 2006). The journey toward discovering new knowledge not only examines the art but also the community participates in the inquiry.

Engaging community moves the heart of the project from the hands of the researcher and allows all of the participants to add their heartbeat to the original heartbeat of the researcher and pass it along to the next person. Allowing personal interpretations and insights in the research process created an open liminal space in which participants could communicate about their relationships with war veterans. While using the materials provided, they molded clay of various colors, wrote poetry and defined their own relationship with war veterans by embellishing the poem with drawings of recognition or sharing stories with fellow art-makers about love, loss, confusion, helplessness and hopefulness.

Stepping from under the critical umbrella, arts-based research can also be known as a form of action research. "Aligned with critical theory, this stance supports action research for social justice or emancipatory action research and participatory action research" (Klien, 2012). With action research, one is looking specifically at the research produced as a way it impart social change, change how people think, or serve as an explanation of human existence. Looking at the knowledge produced by research to promote social justice is the aim of this practice.

Action research concerns itself with intersubjectivity and reflexivity. This method of practice also focuses on the development of voice. This voice within research is necessary to social change. Speaking on the topic of intersubjectivity, the voice would "broadly speak to shared interpretations among and between a research and participants that are socially

constructed through the research process" (Klien, 2012). In addition to subjectivity, reflexivity is vital to this research. Reflexivity can be defined as "a self conscious stance toward research that helps to create a researcher's presence by making explicitly one's motives and desires" (DeFreitas, 2008). There is also an art to the aesthetic values of the research project because it is the "imaginative work of meaning making" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Discussing the aesthetics of the research provides context.

The art-making session in which participants or partners of the project engaged in an art project connected specifically to social change. When this project moved from my living room into the halls of the University Center and used the hands of others, it could have easily been defined as Participatory Action research or even Community-Based research. Being divergent from the systems of oppression, "like participatory action research (PAR), critical arts-based inquiry demonstrate an activist approach to inquiry" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This social justice or activism element is one shared by all the research practices discussed here. Participatory Action Research has a collaborative process in which "each participant's diverse experiences and skills are critical to the outcome of the work" (Brydon-Miller, Kral, Maguire, Noffke and Sabhlok, 2011). This approach to research also looks for themes laced through the research project but is spontaneous. With the interpretation of data through research, "participatory, community-centered research is difficult to predict and often unfold in surprising ways during the process" (Brydon-Miller at el., 2011).

The community-engagement factor is not new to arts-based inquiry, but to understand differently, community-based research highlights the collaborative processes of the project itself. Community based-research combines theory and practice.

> When we create a world where there is union between theory and practice we can freely engage with ideas. Our thoughts then are not abstract meaningless currency, of use solely to those who seek to live their thinking lives in an academic environment removed from everyday life (hooks, 2010).

The theory is that the nap sack will provide a form of recognition and respect for the war-veteran experience. This research practice has influenced this research because it became important as the researcher to incorporate community in the conversation.

The theoretic model for Community Based Research (CBR) includes:

1. CBR is a collaborative enterprise between researchers and the community.
2. CBR validates multiple sources of knowledge and promotes the use of multiple methods of discovery and dissemination of knowledge produced.
3. CBR has its goal in social action and social change for the purpose of achieving social justice.

In order to reach true social change and a reflexive dialogic space for the purpose of social justice, it was important for me not to display myself as researcher but as a facilitator of a safe space to share ideas. Knowledge was produced from the community through different methods of discovery, be it artistic, linguistic, or visual.

In the role of facilitator, I educated participants on art-making strategies, critical thinking, and project management. The goal was to have a space where knowledge could be absorbed organically. This organic absorption did not always take place, which meant I was

led into an educator role. Performing in the educator role meant that I taught art and politics and promoted participation through sharing personal stories. I sought to record data through personal narratives and in some cases paint a vivid picture of the true aesthetics of the events through poetry.

Recording data in a creative yet pertinent way helps classify this work as an a/r/tography. A/r/tography is a term that appeared in 2003 and describes a "hybrid of broadly understood forms of research" (Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouais, Grauer, 2006). Practicing a/r/tography means that one "acknowledges the practices of artist, researcher and educator as places of inquiry and used these practices to create, interpret, and portray new understandings" (Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis, Grauer, 2006). *Practice*, rather than *method*, is the term used. Methods refer to traditional approach to research in which one employs certain data-generating techniques. Using the term *practice* adds relevance to the processes or approaches that the artist, researcher, and educator make toward further personal knowledge. "Practice may involve a range of activities at the center of research, such as customary approaches to art making, creative rituals, original performances, as a subjective position of intuitiveness and responsiveness" (Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasi, Grauer, 2006). This practice allows the voice of the artist/researcher/educator to use poetry, narrative, ethnography, visual art, and many other practices to communicate research.

The Bad Guys: Kindergarten Class

I feel like a giant in a room full of small people. I am sitting at a table that is shorter than I remembered. I am trying to keep my girdle from showing in this almost crouching

position. I am sitting in a a room full of small, eager faces and busy hands ready to touch, feel, and talk rather than sit quietly in their orthodox organization. The teacher and I were the adults in a room of five and six year olds.

The first round of children comes and sits around my table, and a couple struggle to sit close to me. “Hey guys!” I greeted everyone, including the girls. My internal feminist growled at that verbal slip, but I continued. Before class, the teacher and I discussed only cutting stars to allow for time and logistics since most couldn’t write yet. Small groups came to my table, cut stars, which I baked.

Groups of little hands produced “equal opportunity” stars. I had light-heartedly tossed this term around the office in regard to the stars that lost a point or were oddly shaped and colored. It is my policy to use every star. Watching their small hands attack the clay, I saw the true meaning of the stars. The stars represented bodies in the community. Needless to say, I had to let go of creative control and trust the process. During the process of cutting and baking, I would ask questions like, “Do you know any veterans?” or, “Has someone in your family gone to war?” One response from a little boy stitched itself to my heart. “They get the bad guys!” He was excited about his response. My smile covered an eruption of critical thinking. I leaned over, “Who are the bad guys?” The little boy looked at me with a puzzled face. “You know, the bad guys!” In hindsight I had placed a very heavy question on a small and fragile mind. I wanted to discuss moral authority and human rights, but I took a deep breath and breathed out, “Yeah, I know.” He smiled with confidence.

Who are the bad guys? It is funny how the simplest questions pose the biggest roadblocks. Outside of the classroom, I normally would have attacked our narrow-minded

concept of “bad guy.” Honestly, I still believe we are fighting a war for monetary gain rather than moral obligation. So in adult conversations I could attack, sometimes to the point of aggravation and label the military infrastructure as the “bad guys.” In addition to this description of bad guy, I would add to the discussion the fact that we all play the role of “bad guy” from time to time. Surprisingly, on this day I allowed him to have the right answer.

Thinking of human bodies as “good guys” or “bad guys” restructures frames produced by the “imperialist white-supremacist nationalist capitalist patriarchal” system of domination (hooks, 2003). Seeing those at the opposite end of the gun as “bad” takes away their right to live and cognitively takes away their precariousness. In an analysis of speeches made by the Bush administration, a researcher comically refers to America as the cowboys of the world. “The American cowboy represents both the power of “civilization” against the “savage” and “outlaw” forces of disorder and the more “raw” and “untamed” American West against the “effete,” urban and over-refined East”(Christensen & Ferree, 2008). So by taking away the precariousness of the other and putting on the cowboy hat of moral authority we hold up traditional frames that rationalize military occupying and starting wars in other countries.

Saloon Talk

I have become the weird girl that brings art to the bar. While hosting the San Angelo Fine Arts Museum event, I met a lady and her son. She invited me to her family’s business, the Stagecoach Saloon, as a space for the project. Since I was using a snowball technique to acquire spaces for the project, the Facebook invitation was welcomed!

On the night of the event, I entered with the little devil on my shoulder yelling that my brown skin is not welcome. Although the Facebook invitation should have been evidence enough that I was welcomed, my experience of growing up in and knowing the social construction of race in West, TX hindered my enthusiasm. I am welcomed with smiles. While setting up the event, I survey the room constantly. I was on high alert. I was positioned against the back wall, away from the dance floor. The walls were lined with mirrors and wood accented by neon beer signs. I could smell remnants of cigarette smoke staining the chairs. My anxiety grew, and the ceiling got shorter every time I thought about it. My asthma and anxiety danced around each other, leaving me lightheaded. Ease came when the nap sack supporters arrived. When the event began, I uncloaked the timidity and fear that had triggered this attack. Each supporter seemed to bring a bottle of oxygen that remedied it.

Once the event had begun, five ladies migrated from the bar to the Nap Sack Project section. “Oh, isn’t that cute!” was one of the remarks. I explained the project. After the explanation, they fell into a more a fervent mood. I asked them the usual question: “Do you know any war veterans?” I listened to their stories about different veteran experiences. I heard stories about brothers, husbands, and fathers. One lady asked, “Who served in your family?” I blurted without hesitation, “Actually no one in my immediate family.” This answer seemed easier than explaining. Although I had spoken at his funeral, I never had a close relationship with my grandfather, who was a Korean War Veteran. I avoided a relationship with him for the same reason my brown skin avoided traditional West Texas Honky-Tonk establishments. I could see that my response surprised the ladies.

As the night progressed, students came and went. A few dedicated followers stayed all evening. The graduate advisor stayed all night and promoted conversation with anyone that who sat next to him. He seemed to be more comfortable in his brown skin then than I was. I worked hard to tame my liberal tongue and made a choice not to drink in order to avoid radical spills.

A lady with brown hair told me a story about her son and her nephew. The son was younger than her nephew. The nephew took on the role of male role model early in his life. “They were so close when he left for duty.” She looked down at the stars she was cutting, “He came home in a wheelchair.” Her son welcomed his cousin home, but it was to a cold response. She described him covering the windows, keeping the bedroom door closed, and the short temper about his wounded condition. The most difficult part of the story was her trying to explain to her son that he had changed and that “he doesn’t hate you.” I still see the tears that never escaped her eyes. At the end of the evening she said, “I am going to take him one, ok?” ‘Of course” was my response, but in that moment I wanted to say thank you. A clear picture of the community division was illustrated.

Doing Autoethnography Conference

I was invited to set up a critical art-making session during the Doing Autoethnography Conference. During the session, I took the time to listen. I made it a community event in that it took the whole community to keep the flow of the event positively progressing. Each person had to ask the people at the table how to execute each step.

I listened to a story about a man who had served in war. We discussed his blindness. This was connected to depression after he served in the war. We talked about how discharge policy had progressed over the years and explored areas that could be stronger. The rhythm of the conversation was connected to this cutting of the stars. Although he was blind, I didn't see him mess up on one star. Not one star flew off the paper, and my assistance was not needed in the least. Although I didn't make the discovery in the moment, in hindsight, after helping several fully seeing participants fumble with using the star-cutter, he had a delicate fitness to his touch. He could touch an object, dissect an object, and knew how it functioned without instruction. Is this what the military does for a body? Or is this something that was a result of his heightened sense of touch due to his blindness, who knows? What I do know is that he is a gentle man wearing the veteran title. He did not match up to my understanding of veteran. It was a pleasant conversation and broadened my own personal narrow-mindedness.

Across the room a couple of students from South Korea added a different perspective. I asked the students, “Are there any programs or things that the community did for veterans in South Korea?” A puzzled look came upon their face, and it took a moment to compute the English language spilled through my southern drawl. It was a normal response; I taught both of these students in an undergraduate public speaking class. The answer surprised me in that they said no. I asked why. “It is because we all serve in the military in Korea. We serve two years for our country, as long as we are able-bodied and not weak or sick.” I was surprised because it was a light bulb moment that everyone else at the table knew except me. We discussed how Israel’s army operated in a similar fashion. My ignorant self said, “So if you are born a man you fight?” Another person replied, “No, women fight, too.” This led me

toward understanding why I am connected to this topic deeply. I feel unpatriotic because I never served in the armed forces.

CHAPTER III: THE EMBEDDED "I" IN ART AND DISSEMINATION

Starting first

Finishing Last

Just trying to keep pace

Create meaning out of speed

Slowing down to reverberate

Yearning to sew a smooth stitch

Stich Stich stiching away

to become a bricolour

If only I can get this patch to articulate

it

and

I

The bricolage is an ever-expanding group of researchers or "quilters" that add patches of knowledge to the quilt of qualitative research. Deriving from the French language, a bricoleur is a "handyman or handywomen who makes use of the tools available to complete a task" (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011) For the bricoleurs, the task is to produce knowledge that is diverse and helps address the ideological and informational need of

marginalized groups and individuals by exposing the dominant power structure. “In its critical concern for social change, the bricologe seeks insight from the margins of Western societies and the knowledge and way of knowing of non-Western peoples” (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Streinberg, 2011). The use of tools to delve into research and ask unimagined questions about social construction are all apart of this meaning making process.

Taking the place of needle and thread were clay and poetry for this project. *From one person made of clay, to another* is written on the label of the nap sack. This message has artistically functioned to include my own vulnerability as a part of the process. By artistically inviting the recipient to join in this vulnerability I have created a dialogic space. The same as the critical “I” has functioned within the research process and all throughout this thesis. By addressing the complexity of the message there is a push to further the dialogic process and provides support toward a more critical collaborative act. The critical “I” is embedded in the research and the art and as Goltz states “any critical deployment of “I” is a dialogic process” (2005). The embedded critical “I” cannot be erased or separated from its origins and situates the voice of the researcher. The following sections discuss the “I” in the art, research and dissemination process.

Art

As a researcher, employing art in my research means “incorporating both the inspiration of an art and the processes that an artist might use”(Knowles & Cole, 2012). The inspiration was a classmate who was an Iraq War Veteran and a member of Iraq War Veteran’s Against the War. The process included mentorship, event planning, long nights,

cutting clay stars, attending meetings, burning hands on clay oven, writing thank you letters, cleaning up the mess and telling the story.

As a researcher, employing art in my research meant I could "not be bounded by traditions of academic discourse and research processes but, rather, to be grounded in them" or, as I like to say carrying theory into practice (Knowles & Cole, 2007). With "creativity [as] the heart of the enterprise" linking this research to traditional empirical data collection and methodological approaches is difficult (Knowles & Cole, 2007). This has produced numerous obstacles and challenges with in the research process. Many include

- becoming confident about stepping into the unknown;
- melding research methods with processes and representations;
- developing related artistic skills and knowledge; and
- having the energy, time, skill, and technical and, perhaps, financial means associated with "doing" the work. (Knowles & Cole, 2007)

Doing the work in this project was a commitment to the unknown. At the beginning of the project it was more of a personal adventure, but once we received grant funding and media coverage the art became a vehicle to mend a broken community. As a researcher, what have "I" learned about art?

What "I" Know About Art

Art creates a new avenue that breaks away from the normal patterns of life. It takes time to create art, and when I begin to create it becomes a product of pride. I become a perfectionist. We all connect our own cultural identity into the art as both a mechanism of

self-representation and self-projection. In this project I used art to explore my own identity in relationship to America war veterans. The tools included were clay, star clay cutters, paper, and conversation.

Art carves out time and takes effort; it is not a passive act to create art. According to Aristotle, “The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance” (BCE). In effect, all of the participants involved became activists in their own personal struggle with the war veteran/civilian dilemma. Art is the product of this struggle and has provided new ways to communicate to familys and to vent publicly about social issues, and has functioned as a therapeutic process.

Art is human. What is so remarkable about art? It allows us to interpret experience through various avenues. Experience cannot but un-experienced and in some cases experience cannot be articulated verbally. Experience is what really connects us as a human race, as a community, and as some would argue through spirituality. Art may be viewed as an artifice, fantasy, creativity, form or order, heightened existence, disorder, sense, revelation, adornment or embellishment, self-expression and/or something of significance or meaning (Dissanayake, 1980). Because art has so many forms of itself it is pliable in the research process. It functions differently without losing its value.

Art served as the revelation of war veteran/civilian. In a much smaller scale yet a similar fashion, The AIDS Memorial quilt was a revelation of a epidemic sweeping the nation. The activist that started this quilt set a goal to name individuals that they believed would become forgotten in the history books. In the Nap Sack Project we as a community strove to give love to those who needed it through small pieces of art.

Art in this project was creativity come to life. We sometimes need the expression of creativity through art to distract us from everyday mundane, sometimes heartbreaking realities. Even more than fun, creating art creates a positive environment. Throughout each event held for the Nap Sack project wore embracing smiles and comforting shoulders. The stories shared were true. The time was real. Most people stayed the whole event sharing and working toward a common purpose. It became cathartic for some.

Art rebuilds a community. As a mode of survival, art explodes out of the emotional life of the artist. Subway artist Basquiat once said, “I don't think about art when I'm working. I try to think about life.” Art is the work that rebuilds a community and “addresses challenges in representation and positionality” (Chilton & Leavy, 2014). It defines a culture. It is an abstract connection to the other. Functioning like a survival mechanism, it sanctions time for all to come, appreciate, learn and voice concern together. It rebuilds how we communicate with one another.

Art is effective in research. The Nap Sack Project helped to reconstruct understanding about war veterans/civilians. Critically intervening into the current relationship of war veteran and American civilian has provided time and space for reflexivity. The most important part of this project could be seen as the conversations surrounding the art-making process or it could be seen as the disseminated nap sacks. What I can calculate are the over 100 pairs of hands that helped craft the 440 Nap Sacks. I can attest that they were created for and distributed to war veterans. What I cannot calculate are the reactions from veterans in a private setting. Choosing to create art without my name attached has become the biggest

challenge of this research project. In future research perhaps I will take the advice of my advisor and put a name on it.

Art dissemination is another angle of this project. As artist and researcher I searched for those most in need of a little recognition or a reaffirmation of respect. This search took place all across Texas. The first shipment of nap sacks went to a MHMR veteran counselor in Brownwood, TX. Nap Sacks have been given to homeless war veterans in Houston, TX. Others have been handed passed along by family members and friends. The following narratives explore the avenues of dissemination that this project has taken.

The Nap Sack on Display During Graduate Seminar

I positioned my research poster in the back of the room, facing the entrance. I displayed a large bag of prepared Nap Sacks in front. My art and research were on display. I was like a peacock in a room full of blue jays. My poster was white, brown, and golden and had my own personal flare attached to its design. It stated the facts and research highlights about the project with colorful pictures and bullet points. If anyone really wanted to know my critical cultural perspective they had to ask. Many walked by, squinted and kept going. I didn't fit the mold created by Biology and Kinesiology research posters that displayed only black and white text as well as the Angelo State University Logo. I forgot the ASU logo altogether.

My mentors passed and approved. We had cookies and a laugh. My co-worker ran the mail for the Communication office and used it as an opportunity to see the display. He was proud. I made a friend with the poster presenter stationed next to me. I invited her to our

graduate writing nights. I watched a silent viewer walk through the walls of research. He traveled to each station, quietly, reading all the finds. He spoke to one or two researchers but for the most part, he was traveling through the displays at his own pace. He walked up quietly and read the whole poster. He looked with a puzzled amazement at the bag of Nap Sacks displayed. He said, “So, what is this?” Finally! He wanted to hear my presentation. I began talking about how I wanted to change how we understand veterans. “How as a community do we change from our past mistakes?” I asked. “I used this project to engage the community in dialogue and art making.” At this point I was just trying to sound as educated as those seemed around me. He said, “So these are for Veterans?” pointing at the sack. I said, “Yes, do you know a veteran?” He said, “I am one, a Vietnam Vet.” He identified himself, and I was all too pleased to hand him a nap sack and encourage him to take it home. He accepted it reluctantly. Then he looked me in the eye and said, “Can I shake your hand? It seems like you really want to make a difference. Thank you.” His emotions were silent, but his eyes invited me into his heart. Nothing can beat a moment of acceptance and a moment of real gratitude.

Can’t Let It Get Lost in the Mail

So the events are over and it had became my responsibility to distribute the nap sacks in an acceptable way. When I began this research project I had every intention to send these nap sacks out with the help of Soldiers’ Angels. My advisor asked me several times how this was linked to catering to war veterans specifically isolated from active duty soldiers. In my brain it probably was just an easy way to get rid of them all. Perhaps I was fond of the mission

statement that reads: “Soldiers' Angels provides aid and comfort to the men and women of the United States Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, their families, and a growing veteran population” (Soldiers’ Angels, 2003). Finally the time came to send them out. I packed them in a box and created a label and even posted a picture of the Nap Sack Project Facebook page. My heart stopped me, though. Something about not wanting them to get lost in the mail had me drive the box to San Antonio myself. I had created these Nap Sacks with a dialogue as the base of my inquiry and I was determined to do the same with the distribution. I drove to San Antonio as a pit stop on my way to Houston. I used my Ipad to find the address and location of Soldiers’ Angels. I got lost as usual. When I found the address I was lost again, I couldn’t find the building. After asking another storeowner on the block, they said, “They just moved, call the number on the door.” I called and was instructed to mail the donation to the California. I was frustrated, to say the least. Mainly, with myself because I chose the take the easy route, which detoured me into a more complicated distribution ethical dilemma. Would someone really understand what this project means if they received a package in the mail? My heart answered no.

Driving the Message Home

I drive by a man who holds a sign. The sign reads, “Homeless Vet. Need Help!” I reach into my backseat and fumble over sticky toys and clothing to find the box with my Nap Sacks. My fingers reach the muslin bag. Quickly rolling down the window, I yell “Sir!” I hand him the sack. He looks at it with a question. I say, “It is if for you! Read it later! It is a token of recc…” and then the light changed, and my life began again.

What will a nap sack do for someone who is hungry? Is art just as important as food, clothing, and shelter? These questions and many others began fogging my thoughts. I drove away from that man wondering how he would receive the message. I had no way of letting him know about the project or who helped create them. There was no name attached! This was a completely disseminated message that could not put food on the table. My heart's lofty hopes hope it puts hope back in his heart. Of course he could have been the million-dollar homeless hustler we hear about on *20/20* getting rich off of pocket change on the street corner. I choose to believe he was legitimate and needed a little light in what had become a dark moment in his life. So I pray it did.

Nobody Cares

I went to drop off or inquire if I could drop off Nap Sacks at the Homeless Veterans Center off HWY 59 in Houston, TX. I was lost for about thirty minutes looking for this building. I found three people who had large camouflage backpacks walking. As I went to exit my vehicle, which was jam-packed with art supplies and electronics, a bold male with a chipped tooth, a cigarette butt behind his ear knocked on the window. I could smell him from inside my car. He cried as he told me a story about how his car was about to be towed, and he insisted that he needed any type of change. He flashed a stack of bills and said, "I have $81, I just need more to keep him them from towing my car." I began questioning how paying the tow truck driver would stop the towing because from my past experience that was not an option. Having a theatre background, I could see through his weak performance.

As the people with the camouflage backpacks walked out of range of the sound of my voice, I spotted two other men talking. By the time they reached the corner the white male had followed the path of those with the camouflage backpacks. Inherently not following the crowd, I called after the African-American male that was walking away from me. I walked closer to him and see that this man was unkempt like a seedy street. He helped me, but his facial expression described the oddity of this moment. An educated, well-dressed young female had approached a male who belonged to this street. As a naive researcher, I was spinning the roulette wheel on my own safety as a female on the streets of Houston, TX.

When I entered the unmarked building, everything on the inside was clean. I sat and watched the action for about ten minutes before anyone acknowledged my presence. I listened as the camouflage backpack people discussed showing someone a room. Another person walked in the door, a young male. He had a backpack and a look of being lost. He asked the receptionist if there was room. She, in a very sympathetically automatic response, let him know that there were no vacancies. After speaking with her I discovered there were only 115 units at this location. While still in the waiting room, an African-American female asked about the project. I gave her my rehearsed response. She leaned closer and said, 'You need to leave your purse in your car." She was a part of the street team at this shelter and was one of the camouflage backpack people I had seen walking earlier. She encouraged me to never do this work alone again. "I only carry my ID in my pocket and I never hit the streets alone." From this experience I walked away with the attitude that nobody cares. Although my heart may be in the right place, it is a world of survival on the streets. Nobody would care about my noble cause when breaking into my car to steal for either a drug addiction or mere

survival motives. My heart felt like it lost credibility in this moment because taking my research outside of an academic setting meant camouflaging my vulnerability. This was the exact opposite feeling I expected to feel in this moment of dissemination. In an academic setting we learn:

> By rethinking our relationships within communities and across disciplines such as the arts and humanities, we are presented with opportunities to move beyond imitation of "scientific" reports in dissemination of our work and look towards means of (re)presentation that embrace the humanness of social science pursuits (Jones, 2006).

My human heart was exposed on the field.

V.A. Hospital Waiting Room

Today I went to the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Houston, TX with a veteran friend. Both of our sons joined us on this trip. The four of us sit in a crowded pharmacy waiting area. As usual, I found this as an opportune time to give out some nap sacks. In the hall leading up to the waiting room I had passed out several nap sacks to those who passed me in the hall. There was a blind man with a female companion. I handed the man a nap sack and said, "Maybe later you can read it to him." These words sound patronizing to my ear. Continuing to walk toward the waiting room I also see a women with dreadlocks walking toward me. "Don't I know you?" She asked this question with a stern kindness that was familiar, but I could not pin-point her identity. "No. Are you a veteran?" She confirmed her status as a war veteran, and I slipped a nap sack into her hand. "Oh, goodness I know you

from the Lawrence Center!" I nodded with a smile. As we continued walking, my son asked me if I knew her. I told him with confidence, "I have never been to a Lawrence Center."

Sitting in the waiting room gave me time to reflect on who this woman was. While the mind churned on pin pointing her identity I began to talk to those around me. I sat closest to an Iraq War Veteran, four Vietnam Veterans, and one Korean War Veteran. The Iraq Veteran had a cast on his arm, and it had been positioned with a rod to be parallel to the ground. I slipped a nap sack in his free hand and discussed at length about the beauty in Iraq and Afghanistan. He described places he has seen and how some of the landscapes were so "mesmerizing" and different than what he had expected.

To continue giving out nap sacks, I sat down between two Vietnam Veterans. I handed them each a nap sack. The one on the left passed it back, "I don't get paid till tomorrow." I pushed it back toward him and say "I don't want your money. This is a thank you." His follow-up question was, "You are not from Houston, are you?" Both men chuckled. I confirmed his assertion. "You know your blessing is in this project?" "Yes, sir" were the words that fell from my lips. They both tucked the nap sacks in their pockets. Their smiles patched up my faith in this project. At this moment the dreadlocked women walked past, and I finally recognized her. She was the receptionist at the Homeless shelter aka The Lawrence Center. There had been a year of time between us meeting originally. She had remembered the project and she recognized me. There is something powerful about being recognized.

Conclusion From the Heart

I speak the heart's discourse because the heart is never far from what matters. Without the heart pumping its words, we are nothing but an outdated dictionary, untouched. (Pelias, 2004)

I began this project as an optimist of social radicalism with a belief in change. I put my heart into it, which means that I listened to all the stories, walked the miles, tasted the moments of defeat, cried while holding a hand, dug clay bits from under my nails, burned myself on clay baking ovens and produced all the paper work. I did it because I care about people, all people. I care about how we treat people and understand people in our society. I did it because there was a community call-to-action. This call started as a whisper of wonderment in an office and exploded in exploration with seven art-making events, a year dissemination process, and a research paper documenting how methodological approaches help me understand it all. I was afraid to end the process because for me it ends the recognition. It places things back into the status quo dropping us back into normative habits of producing boundaries for others and ourselves through celebrations and faulty forms of recognition. I was changed, and that is all I know for sure. I hope others remember the moments that I do with the same reverence and respect. Ending this project, I am still an optimist with a belief in change, but now I know that change can be fleeting. We are all only given a select amount of opportunities to advocate for change in research, as an artist and as an educator. How do we change things? Where do we change things? What things need to be changed? For me in this moment of my life, I yearned to change how we view war veterans in our society as disposable bodies, and I became obligated to this mission. I wanted to

change the celebratory attitude we all have toward Veteran's Day and Memorial Day. I pleaded to the binaries to reveal themselves in written form. I prayed over the project like I pray over my child, letting it free into the world to bring light in a dark place.

CHAPTER IV: FRAMING CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter, I will discuss war and war discourse in regard to modern wars. In this quick overview of modern war culture in America, I will discuss some of the epistemological issues within these frames. These frames will be exposed while discussing research implications. Throughout the previous chapters I have explored my own identity in relationship to the war veteran/civilian binary. In this final chapter, I will take themes that appeared in the autoethnographic accounts and discuss how they relate to war discourse in America. I will also explore the areas of injustices that may be explored in future research.

Discourse according to Foucault is a "systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, and courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak" (Foucault, 1980) With this perspective there is a link between knowledge, power and discourse. (Foucault, 1980) More specifically, discourse is a tool used by those in power to produce knowledge that will help frame the public's perceptions about different social issues.

For Americans, these frames have constructed our perception of war, moral authority, and military occupation. These frames are produced knowledge of presidential speeches and military recruitment in conjunction to patriotic rights of passage within the family structure. Hearing President Bush call-to-action Americans with his famous "War on Terror Speech" and seeing publications that urge us to "Be the best you can be in the Army" tug at Americans' patriotic cord. Furthermore, a family's affiliation to the military can also be used to urge participation in military activity. Being roused up into patriotic duty, these young

men and women go to war with hopes of fighting for freedom and ending the reign of "bad people." In reality the idea of "bad people" is subjective and biased. The idea of a just war depends on which side of line you stand. I agree with Butler when she wrote:

> The idea of a legal war or, indeed, a just war, relies on the controllability of instruments of destruction. But because uncontrollability is part of that very destructiveness, there is no war that fails to commit a crime against humanity, a destruction of civilian life. (2009)

The "destruction of civilian life" is two-fold. Not only do we destroy homes and communities around the world with our military occupation tactics, we create a separation within the American community where civilians are deemed innocent, and soldiers are considered our warriors.

The American community is divided by those who do serve and by those who do not. In an article exploring the widening gap between war veteran and civilian a veteran commented: "There's no challenge for the 99% of the American people who are not involved in the military. They don't lose when soldiers die oversees, they're not being forced to pay, for the wars, and there's no sense among the vast population of what we're engaged in" (Thompson, 2011). This quote is from Army veteran Ron Capps, who served as an intelligence analyst in Afghanistan and highlights an apathetic American community. This nonchalant response to war and an disengagement of our American community helps reinforce the cultural binary of war veteran/civilian.

The Bottom Line

Before I talk further about this binary I would like to note the bottom line. War and military occupation is a billion dollar industry for American companies. “These companies have benefited tremendously from the growth in military spending in the U.S., which by far has the largest military budget in the world. In 2000, the U.S. defense budget was approximately $312 billion. By 2011, the figure had grown to $712 billion” (Weigley, 2013). These companies not only profit from war, they reenergize the need for war because money has become the bottom line. The top ten companies profiting from war are Lockheed Martin, Boeing, BAE Systems, General Dynamics, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, EADS, Finmeccanica, L-3 Communication, and United Technologies. (Weigley, 2013) This industry is able to gain support by playing off of a citizen’s urge to be patriotic. The patriotic spirit of defending our American soil can come from external motivation like presidential speeches and military recruitment materials, but there can also be internal motivation such as family tradition. No matter where the motivation comes from, there is still a bottom line to answer to in modern wars.

Patriotic Duty

Once upon a time there was a function to American citizenship known as the draft. It may have been biased with only selecting males to serve, but its selection process was random. It also created an inclusive nature to recruitment. Now that the draft has ended, things have changed. According to former defense secretary, “In the absence of the draft that reaches deeply in the ranks of the citizenry, service in the military— no matter how laudable

– has become something for other people to do" (Thompson, 2011). In the years following the expulsion of the draft, recruits were solicited from high schools, gyms, and mall booths jam-packed with brochures about "Be All You Can Be in the Army".

By making this leap from mandated service to volunteer service, new biases and challenges are linked to the a biased recruitment of socioeconomically disadvantaged high school athletes and ROTC cadets, wayward young men in pursuits of "straightening up their life", and women on a mission to teach equality. Today, "nearly all are high-school graduates and most come from working and middle classes" (Thompson, 2011). This seems to be associated with a connection to service as a career. The Marine website it reads:

> Whether you serve as enlisted or officer, as a Marine you will make more than a living—you will make a difference. You will protect our nation from a spectrum of threats, as well as conduct and participate in humanitarian efforts around the world. You will also gain a new sense of a purpose and pride that comes from making a positive difference. There are countless career opportunities within the Corps that provide the training and experience needed for a successful and rewarding career in the Corps and beyond. (Marine Corps Career, 2014)

Using the Internet as a recruiting source, each branch of the military recruit employees. The bottom-line aspect to war has created even more tension in the rope between military and civilian life because it is a career path. Historically, one could make a career of their military service, but in this modern age one is recruited with a career in mind. It is apart of the solicitation literature and frames the understanding of patriotic duty.

Looking at the big picture, with the creation of job opportunities it is imperative to keep employees busy, working, or creating new ways to work. Rather than using those bodies to fix home-front issues, they create war. We support war. We have become apathetic because the blood is not on our doorsteps. I personally hate war, but I never do anything about it by voicing my opinion to my local representative. I don't write letters to my president rejecting decisions made to re-enter a war for no reason. I simply truck along on my own career path.

There is a flip-side to patriotic duty that should be addressed in modern war culture. The abiding principle of American democracy: civilian control of the military. The founders of America put the responsibility of defending our nation and liberties in the hands of civilians who would temper the need for war. According to this frame:

> [the] principle of civilian control... embodied the idea that every qualified citizen was responsible for the defense of the nation and the defense of liberty, and would go to war, if necessary. Combined with the idea that the military was to embody democratic principles and encourage citizen participation, the only military force suitable to the Founders was a citizen militia, which minimized divisions between officers and the enlisted (Ciaro, 2001)

Civilian control of the military would mean not only do civilians have power with the decisions regarding war, we have a responsibility to be informed enough to make the decision to go to war, if necessary.

In recent years discussions and arguments have been made to reinstate the draft. I do not personally want to see this happen. Although the thought of the draft is daunting, it serves

a purpose. The new argument for it is not to increase numbers but to provide a check and balance system to military activity. In a speech given at the University of California, Berkley James Wright eloquently clarifies this check and balance system.

> The assumption was that if all of our sons and daughters faced the possibility of being engaged in armed conflict in Iraqi villages and in the Afghanistan Mountains, perhaps no sons and daughters would face this exposure – or if they did there would be a full discussion and acceptance of the national interest that required this. (Wright, 2010)

As a civilian, I am obligated to my fellow persons in uniform. This obligation is rooted historically in how the founders viewed the use of military forces. Additionally, the check and balance system presented in the speech can be seen as a mirror into which bodies we view as precarious.

Hindsight of Patriotism

The creation of organizations such as Iraq War Veterans against the War or Vietnam Veterans against the War would lead me to believe that not all soldiers agreed with the military culture or the way America uses its military forces. This statement applies to soldiers drafted and those who made a choice to serve. Those who serve become products of the institution that they serve and with a choice to serve, service people are now beginning to speak out about injustices. In conjunction with career motivated military exploitation, this institution has been neglecting veteran care. Iraq Veterans against the War (IVAW) call for:

- Immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces in Iraq

- Reparations for the human and structural damages Iraq has suffered and stopping the corporate pillaging of Iraq so that their people can control their own lives and future; and
- Full benefits, adequate healthcare (including mental health), and other supports for returning servicemen and women home. (Iraq War Veterans Against the War, 2012)

These concerns are linked with improper use of military forces. These concerns listed above, especially the second bullet, depicts what happens when we no longer view the bodies of war as precarious. The civilians on Iraqi soil are equally as precarious as American civilians and deserve basic human rights.

One veteran tells a reporter, "The veneer of civilization is stripped away. Just think how much money we've spent on infrastructure in Iraq and Afghanistan, and we don't do it in our own country" (McCormich, 2013). This idea of organized veterans striving to clean the slate of injustice indicates that military experience needs checks and balances. It needs educated civilians to come together and think of a solution.

As civilians it is time to address injustices in regard to ethics in military action. There is also a need to address injustices that happen within the military infrastructure. There are now divergent female voices surfacing needing our help to combat the internal rape culture of the military. *Rolling Stone Magazine* took a bold stand in 2013 when it published an article entitled "The Rape of Petty Officer Blumer." In this article several women were interviewed regarding this tragic reality. One officer reports, "sexual assault make up the fabric of daily American military life," and another says "[I]t's seemed like everyone gets raped and assaulted and no one does anything about it; it's is a big rape cult" (Erdley, 2013).

As war veterans voice their needs and expose truths about the military, how can we civilians keep silent?

War Veteran/Civilian

The business of war is invasive, subjective, and biased and has been corruptly used by our government to institute moral authority in the world. Although this study has not been an extensive investigation into war in America, it has served as a means to expose the challenges surrounding war veteran/civilian binary through a collaborative art process and a critical interpretation of this process.

Moments in this project highlighted issues with Moral authority. This topic presented itself when speaking with the veteran in the park in the "Talk in the Park" narrative. The idea of killing for patriotic duty has a way of removing itself from the meaning of murder when interpreted in certain ways. As long as the "bad guys" are the target we seem to support war in our culture. We can also see how quickly these frames manifest in our lives in the "Bad Guys: A Kindergarten Class" narrative. In both of these narratives children served as the magnifying glass.

Moments connected to the research highlight the reality of this binary in "Saloon Talk" and "Nobody Cares". The conversation about a woman's son and his cousin show a clear picture of how war divides a family. With a micro look into this family, we can also see what war does to a community. The relationship deteriorates when one body is exposed, changed, damaged and returned home after war. "Nobody Cares" show the reality of a post-war community specifically dealing with homelessness. It also humbles the ambitions of an

eager researcher hoping to implement change one Nap Sack at a time. In this moment, I realized the change would need to be larger than a random act of kindness, but a more collective civilian voice that brings to action change in the military infrastructure and demands that civilian's keep control over the military. The control I speak of is not one of oppressive force, but one that provides a check and balance. This idea should also manifest into veteran care and tactics used in healing a community divided by war.

Moments of interdependence were documented with the veterans from the "Fine Art's Museum" and "Doing Autoethnography Conference". Each war veteran empowered this project by showing perseverance toward support and recognition of the war-veteran experience. This interdependence showed itself in the lobby of the V.A. Hospital when the Vietnam Veterans tucked the nap sacks in their pockets, and in the long journey the woman in the wheelchair took at the Fine Art's Museum.

Overall, this project addressed the epistemological issue of war in the American community. Specifically looking at the relationship, roles, and responsibilities between war veteran and civilian, the Nap Sack Project depended on both civilian activity and veteran activity. The events would have never flourished had no civilians attended with a need for an outlet to vent through or care through. The dissemination of the nap sacks depended on the attitude of the war veteran. The project shared boarders and started conversations about popular American war culture with hopes of awaking civilians to their obligation to not only recognize the bodies that participate in war as "precarious bodies" but to realize our own power behind the war industry.

Serving as a critical intervention into the celebratory frames of war, The Nap Sack Project implicates a need for divergent forms of recognition. On a local level it is important as a community to continue to produce innovative forms of recognition for the precarious bodies of war. During the research journey there were several other projects that I became aware of that fell in line with my own purpose. These projects served as forms of recognition and support. One was a business card with the American flag printed on one side and a poem about patriotism on the other. Another was a single red flower attached to a poem written by a war veteran for war veterans. The Nap Sack is unique to these in that these other projects were not hand made or inclusive of precarious materials such as clay and poems written in pencil. What these projects along with the Nap Sack Project imply is a need in our community. The need is to recognize the war veteran experience differently. These projects break away from celebratory frames and provide critical reflection into a community divided by war. It is important to keep these new forms of recognition emerging. By allowing the emergence of such projects the American community we organically find way to heal veterans from war trauma.

Also inline with the community's call for recognition and support, it is important for academic communities to produce research that is action-based. Producing research projects that not only question our culture, but also provide avenues for change are important. The Nap Sack project functioned as both a dialogic platform to question our culture and as an active form of recognition. Having action-based research helps mend heart's, it gives a community purpose, and potentially provides the type of critical thought needed for permanent change in our society at the personal level.

Serving as community leaders, academic researchers need to embrace the vulnerability it takes to produce this type of research. A part of this vulnerability comes from listening to the needs of a community. By listening and producing scholarly works that documents a community's voice researchers become advocates for social awareness, redress, and change. Researchers in turn produce data that records, documents, and provides analysis on cultural topics the needs of a community can become clearer. The clarity can promote change in legislative areas.

For future research endeavors, I would encourage a break though in how arts-based research is used. For one example, potential politicians could host art-making events to hear what Americans are concerned about in regard to social institutions or cultural binaries. It may seem trivial to some that value quantitative analysis but there is a kinetic response to making art. This kinetic response engages the community. It is a personal goal to create an avenue where arts-based research has a credible influence in legislation and policy making.

This research indicates that new research with the intent to critically intervene into the military culture is needed. Moving beyond the topic of this project, we need research to explore topics concerning rape culture in the military as well as veterans' benefits and rights. Although we should continue to explore human rights issues, we should also explore new creative ways to address/process trauma. Unbiased civilian research into the military infrastructure can help define ways to protect the human rights of soldiers and war veterans. Having this exploration into the military infrastructure could provide a catalyst for change in how veterans and civilians value each other as precarious bodies.

While it is quintessential to explore the military infrastructure, it is also necessary to bridge gaps of understanding within the American community. With any qualitative research about precarious bodies that experience violence, one could find potential links to hyper-masculinity, substance abuse, and other social problems. Although this study was specific to war veteran/civilian, violence and violent acts help shape the war-veteran experience. Violence is not simply a military tool; it is used though out our community to enforce control. It would be interesting to continue to explore the seemingly inherent role of violence in democracy.

Research from the perspective of the war veterans would also be an excellent addition to the bricolour quilt. Although we can see reports in media that reference veterans, this sector of our community needs to break away from research that affirms the status quo and establishes the correct proportion of power to everyday life. This research implies that a need for such research is relevant.

The research conducted here also illustrates a need to embrace vulnerability. This vulnerability allows for time within the research process as well as the transparent human element that surrounds us all. It would also be interesting to expand this research by categorizing the narratives into research done with children, adults and war veterans. This would include further interviews and art-making sessions. In this expansion it would also be interesting to see the potential of the young populations joining military forces as a career path.

To summarize the experience, the Nap Sack project was a two-and-a-half year process of exploring the relationship between war veterans and civilians in America. Along

the journey information was gathered that implicates the need for active civilian involvement in military topics concerning basic human rights, new creative research to further the healing process for war veterans and opportunities to can help bridge a community divided by war.

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